

President's Report

It is my responsibility and pleasure to present the Annual Report on behalf of the Age Concern Hamilton Council for the year ending June 2017. This is my second year as President.

The Māori proverb to which I referred in the previous report has not lost its significance. It still encapsulates the essence of our collaborative work:

He aha the mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

What's the most important thing in the world? It's people, it's people, it's people.

The terrific work of this organisation does not happen by accident. It is the outcome of considerable effort and commitment from many different individuals and groups who believe that the quality of life for seniors in this community is of great importance. In many respects, how a community shows concern for older people is a measure of the beneficence of people across that entire community. A growing proportion of seniors in this neo-liberal environment are subject to poverty, social isolation, elder abuse and deficient housing. People throughout this agency – fellow Council members, the Executive Officer, employed paid staff and the high number of volunteers – continue to combine their resources and talents to maximise positive outcomes for older people.

The period of this report has been demanding at both national and local levels. At a national level, the parent organisation, Age Concern New Zealand, has continued to undergo its own changes, to make it better fit for purpose. Last year I reported on a Modernization Plan, spearheaded by our own representative, Peter Oettli, as leader of the Reference Group that almost was passed by the 35 semi-autonomous Age Concerns but failed by a narrow margin. Yet the principles underlying this initiative to make the organisation a vibrant agency still remain. In particular, the idea of working collaboratively across the country to more skilfully use our respective strengths remains to the forefront of this Council's thinking. We are systematically linking with other geographically close Age Concerns to marshal our resources and expertise.

This Annual Report also includes details of the operations of Age Concern Hamilton by our recently-appointed Executive Officer, Brent Nielsen. Gail Gilbert retired from the EO position late in 2016 and presented us with a major challenge to replace the level of her expertise, accumulated over around 13 years. Gail had set in place procedures and operations that had stood the test of time but we have been very fortunate to find that Brent Nielsen has stepped into this important role and demonstrated considerable expertise and skill based on his previous extensive experience in the not-for-profit context. In this Annual Report Brent reports on "core business" of this Age Concern in delivery of services to older people in this region – the Accredited Visiting Service, the Supportive Service, Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Health Promotion, Shopping Service and a distinctive Education Programme. The tireless energy of all staff has enabled the maintenance of these important services, most delivered under contract. The Council deeply appreciates the dedication and commitment of the staff.

The strategic direction of Age Concern Hamilton remains the Council's responsibility. The dictum of "Serving the needs of older people" is the foundation of our work. Our ambition is tempered by

financial realities (see separate Treasurer's Report). In the 2017 year we have had to face plenty of challenges, particularly the negotiation of the new Elder Abuse Response Service contract through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Our goal is to find effective ways to implement social policy of greater benefit for local seniors, but at the same time to maintain "our house" in a sustainable financial position. For this reason the AC Council has kept a watchful eye on the bottom financial line to keep reserves in a healthy state in case any unexpected event occurs (e.g. loss of a significant contract).

There have been changes within the Council of Age Concern Hamilton during this financial year. I believe it is important for any organization to keep a balance between experienced Council members and new people who usually provide fresh insights into the agency and challenge assumptions. In the former category Geoff Brazier, as Vice-President, has provided solid support. Evelyn Weir, as a previous National President, continues to strengthen our understanding of historical and current events; Peter Oettli, as current National President, has a depth of knowledge concerning this organisation which is unmatched. Irene Bryant continues to provide views representing rural women that help us to relate our provision to the wider Waikato region. Among more recent recruits to the Council, Gill Lawrence has been an outstanding member who brings a commitment to rigorous procedures coupled with a vision for this organization. Recently, she has joined the national Age Concern Council, thus providing this Hamilton agency with two members at the national level. Peter Mirams has been resilient in his role as Treasurer (see his separate report) and as leader of the Finance sub-committee. More recent members of the Council are Graham Borland who has offered much pragmatic advice, Paul Methven and Richard Jerram (recently co-opted) both providing effective legal advice to the Council and to the EO. I look forward to their continuing expertise being used by this Council. Overall, Age Concern Hamilton is blessed to have such a store of wisdom at its fingertips to support the work of dedicated staff.

In its governance work, members of Council engage in on-going discussion of current issues affecting the needs of older people in Hamilton and the Greater Waikato. We constantly review policies on a revolving basis to ensure their currency. We keep in close dialogue through the EO with staff and often have staff visit us in our meetings and update us to emergent matters. While most of the work of Council is conducted at our monthly meetings, there are sub-committees for Finance (leader, Peter Mirams), Risk Management (Gill Lawrence); Funding and Sponsorship (Graham Borland) and Health and Safety (Geoff Brazier) which report back with items for the whole Council to consider. A newly-established sub-committee on Education, led by myself, will offer assistance to Brent for keeping our programme in this domain relevant to older people. I am appreciative of all Council members' extra time and voluntary effort. Further, we are fortunate to have the excellent services of Marcia Black, Administration Manager (Rosemary Solly left us in early 2017 to live in the Bay of Plenty), for her expertise in financial operations and of Anne Clarke, Minutes Secretary, for her thorough recording of our Council deliberations.

While the internal workings of the Council are important, we also need to be vigilant about the wider external context in which we work. In this regard, the Council has been deliberate in fostering effective relationships with other kindred organizations. The general public needs to know of our services; other organizations, especially those connected to social and welfare services, can help in collaborating for mutual benefit. Our firm relationship with the Rauawaawa Trust enables us to be more mindful of the needs of kaumātua in our region; Evelyn Weir's contribution to the AgeWise

Advisory Group, provides us with an effective feedback loop to our work. We are conscious as a Council to continue to reach out to other groups whose kaupapa is consistent with ours so we can be relevant to more diverse seniors. We are conscious of the need to provide more value-added benefits to members as part of a more enhanced marketing plan.

In a previous year, this Hamilton-based Council provided support to the Thames/Coromandel to enable them to establish their own operations. This was achieved through consistent support at the governance and operational levels. We are now in the throes of scoping the work required, together with local people in the Taumarunui area (one which has been disadvantaged through the withdrawal of several industries), to see whether we can assist seniors in that region. Over the ensuing months we should be in a better position from which to make informed decisions upon an appropriate way forward.

Related to our current plight, the medium term security of the Celebrating Age Centre (CAC) has yet to be determined. The Hamilton City Council, with whom we have a positive relationship, decided to allow more localised management of facilities in Hamilton. No decision has been made yet about whether Age Concern Hamilton will take responsibility for the future management of this splendid centre for seniors. We are optimistic that a beneficial way forward can be found.

In summary, this has been another year of continuing challenges competently met by committed staff and Council members with whom I am proud to be associated. Overall, the continuing work of this agency depends on strong support from the wider communities that it serves and on maintaining effective relationships with stakeholders. Members and friends of the Age Concern Hamilton remain essential to our work and we appreciate this on-going support.

Professor Brian Findsen
President